REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5 and 6 will be pending. Claim 1 is amended and claim 4 is cancelled.

Claims 1-3, 5 and 6 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hase et al. in view of Fukada. This rejection has been rendered moot by the above proposed amendment incorporating the features of claim 4 into claim 1.

Claim 4 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hase et al. and Fukada further in view of Yamamoto et al. Favorable reconsideration of this rejection is earnestly solicited.

In addition to incorporating the features of claim 4, claim 1 has been amended to specify the ratio of the tension on the laminate after passing the metal rolls to the tension on the laminate when the protective film is being delaminated. That is, claim 1 has been amended to specify that the ratio of the second tension to the first tension ranges from 1.2 to 10 (see page 12, lines 17-23 of the specification).

The application of two types of tensions arranged as such provides the flexible laminate substrate with not only an excellent size stability but also excellent outer appearance because its outer appearance will not be damaged during the delamination of the protective film, as well as during the lamination.

Meanwhile, Hase et al. discloses a protective film which is used to obtain a laminate substrate having an excellent outer appearance, but fails to mention or suggest the technical

problem solved by the present invention, that is, outer appearance deterioration will occur if a tension is not applied during the delamination of the protective film.

Therefore, Hase et al. does not provide any motivation to apply the two types of tension like the first tension and the second tension in the present invention.

Moreover, Fukada also does not disclose such technical concept that two types of tensions are applied. Thus, even for a person skilled in the art, it is not easy to attain the invention of claim 1 of the present application from Fukada and Hase et al.

As one of the reasons for the obviousness rejection, the Examiner points out that Hase et al. teaches that wrinkling of the laminate can be minimized by reducing tension on the materials before lamination to the minimum needed for the webs to stably proceed. (See Hase et al. column 5, lines 32-38).

However, the Examiner's attention is drawn to the description in Hase et al. that "the tension of the metal material may be at least three times stronger than that of the laminating materials (see Hase et al. column 5, lines 32-38). This description clearly explains that the tensions of the thermally fusible laminating material and the metal material are different before the lamination. Because a pressure is applied on the laminate by using metal rolls etc. during the lamination, the tensions of each material becomes equal after the lamination. Thus, it is clearly understandable that the tensions are different before and after the lamination in the invention recited in Hase et al.

For this reason, it is clearly understandable that the tension right after the lamination will not be reduced to the minimum despite the description of Hase et al. regarding the tensions before the lamination.

Therefore, even if Fukada and Hase et al. are combined, the person skilled in the art will generally regard that (i) a tension necessary for the delamination and reduced to the minimum to stably proceed the laminate substrate is applied on the laminate substrate; and (ii) the tension applied to the laminate substrate after the laminate substrate has passed between the metal rolls and the tension applied to the laminate substrate during the delamination can only be equal.

In claim 1 of the present application, the ratio of the second tension/first tension ranges from 1.2 to 10. Thus, the tension after the laminate substrate has passed between the metal rolls in claim 1 of the present application can be lower than that in the combination of Fukada and Hase et al.

Therefore, claim 1 of the present application attains such an effect unexpectable from Fukada and Hase et al. that claim 1 of the present invention can provide a flexible laminate substrate more excellent in size stability than Fukada and Hase et al.

Yamamoto et al. fails to provide the teachings which Hase et al. and Fukada lack.

Moreover, in the invention in claim 1 of the present invention, two types of tensions are applied using the nip rolls. This configuration is not disclosed nor suggested in any one of Hase et al., Fukada, and Yamamoto et al. Thus, it had been difficult to arrive at claim 1 of the present application, even for a person skilled in the art.

For at least the foregoing reasons, the claimed invention distinguishes over the cited art and defines patentable subject matter. Favorable reconsideration is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action by applicants would be desirable to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone applicants' undersigned attorney.

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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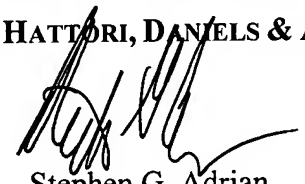

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